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Union of Toiling Peasants

The Programme of the Union of Toiling Peasants

1920 — the Tambov rising

December 1920

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[Translator's note: In 1920 a large-scale peasant uprising broke out in Tambov province, in the fertile Central Black Earth area of Russia. The grievances which sparked it off were largely to do with Soviet government food requisitioning policies, which were frequently brutal, arbitrary, and left peasants with less grain than they required for their own households. What made this particular rising distinctive, apart from its scale, was the formation of a political body to coordinate its actions and articulate its demands. This body, the Union of Toiling Peasants (*Soyuz trudovykh krest'yan*) was headed by A S Antonov, a former member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. — FK]

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The Union of Toiling Peasants has set itself the task of overthrowing the government of the communist-bolsheviks, which has reduced the country to penury, ruin and shame. The Union, which organises volunteer partisan detachments, is waging an armed struggle in order to destroy this detestable government and its rule. Its aims are as follows:

1. Political equality for all citizens, without division into classes.
2. An end to the civil war and a return to civilian life.
3. Every effort to be made to ensure a lasting peace with all foreign states.
4. The convocation of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of equal, universal, direct and secret suffrage, without predetermining its choice of political system, and preserving the voters' right to recall deputies who do not carry out the people's will.

5. Prior to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the establishment of provisional authorities in the localities and the centre, on an elective basis, by those unions and parties which have taken part in the struggle against the communists.
6. Freedom of speech, the press, conscience, unions and assembly.
7. The full implementation of the law on the socialisation of the land, adopted and confirmed by the former Constituent Assembly.
8. The supply of basic necessities, particularly food, to the inhabitants of the towns and countryside through the co-operatives.
9. Regulation of the prices of labour and the output of factories run by the state.
10. Partial denationalisation of factories; heavy industry, coal mining and metallurgy should remain in state hands.
11. Workers' control and state supervision of production.
12. The opportunity for both Russian and foreign capital to restore the country's economic life.
13. The immediate restoration of political, trade and economic relations with foreign powers.
14. Free self-determination for the nationalities inhabiting the former Russian empire.
15. The initiation of wide-ranging state credit for restoring small-scale agriculture.
16. Freedom for handicraft production.

17. Unfettered teaching in schools and compulsory universal literacy education.
18. The volunteer partisan units currently organised and operating must not be disbanded until the Constituent Assembly has been convened and it has resolved the question of a standing army.